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## American Commemorative Panels: Kwanzaa

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# Kwanzaa

KWANZAA IS AN ANNUAL seven-day festival honoring family, community, and culture that takes place from December 26 to January 1. Drawing on African traditions, it is celebrated by millions of people in the United States, Canada, the Caribbean, and England. Though invented in the United States, where it was introduced in 1966, Kwanzaa is now celebrated by some Africans.

As with other holiday celebrations, Kwanzaa has its symbols: mazao (crops), mkeka (mat), kinara (the candle holder), muhindi (corn),

zawadi (gifts), kikombe cha umoja (the unity cup), and mishumaa saba (the seven candles). In addition, each of the seven days of Kwanzaa represents one of the Nguzo Saba, or seven principles to live by. These principles are Umoja (Unity); Kujichagulia

(Self-determination); Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility); Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics); Nia (Purpose); Kuumba (Creativity); and Imani (Faith).



The design created by stamp artist Daniel Minter portrays seven figures that represent the seven days and seven principles of Kwanzaa. The figures wear flowing robes; two have head wraps intended to identify them as mothers. Minter describes their head wraps as "crowns of fabric." On top of each crown is a bird identified by the artist as a Sankofa bird that is known for looking to the past to understand the present. Minter says this bird "never forgets from where it came."

First issued in 2004 as part of the Holiday Celebration series, this stamp is the second to commemorate Kwanzaa. The first Kwanzaa stamp was issued in 1997.

## Symbols of Kwanzaa

- MAZAO (crops)
- MKEKA (mat)
- KINARA (the candle holder)
- MUHINDI (corn)
- ZAWADI (gifts)
- KIKOMBE CHA UMOJA (the unity cup)
- MISHUMAA SABA (the seven candles)



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